Pension Bima Yojana, a pension plan for senior citizens, has been launched all over the country on 14th July, 2003. The scheme is being implemented through the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and provides for pension at return of 9%. The salient features of the scheme are given below:—

Eligibility:

- Indian citizens aged 55 years and above are eligible.
- One person from a family can apply. The family comprises of spouse, minor children and dependants.
- Any valid age proof would be accepted by LIC.

Benefits:

- Pension during the life-time of the pensioner.
- In the event of death of the pensioner, purchase price will be returned to the nominee.
- Minimum pension Rs.250/- per month and maximum pension Rs.2,000/- per month.
- Mode of payment of pension—Monthly, Quarterly, Half-yearly or Yearly as opted.

Premium: For monthly pension single premium payable in lump sum—minimum Rs.33,335/- and maximum Rs.2,66,665/-.

Exit Option: After 15 years, the pensioner has the option to withdraw from the scheme. In that event, the entire purchase price would be returned to him.

Loan: Upto 75% of the total deposited premium will be allowed in the form of a loan after the policy has completed 3 years. The rate of interest on the loan will be determined by the LIC from time to time.

(d) All citizens above the age of 55 years are eligible under the scheme.

Income Tax exemption to senior citizens

1711. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the age fixed for a senior citizen to be eligible to get benefit under Income-Tax Act and post office savings;

(b) whether the age fixed for a senior citizen to get benefit of interest in Bank deposit or concession in rail reservation is 60 years; and

(c) if so, the reasons for disparity and steps taken to enforce uniformity of age as a senior citizen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) The Income-tax Act provides for a tax rebate upto rupees fifteen thousand in case of individuals of sixty-five years and above. There are no special benefits to senior citizens under the post office savings;

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) In 1992, the tax rebate was only 10% of tax and was restricted to senior citizens having income below rupees fifty thousand. Subsequently, the rebate has been increased to rupees fifteen thousand and has been made applicable to all individuals above the age of 65 years. In view of the revenue considerations, the present age limit is considered adequate.

Guidelines for establishment of commercial banks

1712. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the latest guidelines for establishment of commercial banks in private sector;

(b) the details of the commercial banks, both in the private and the public sector together with their total paid-up capital, deposits and disbursal, particularly to the priority sector, during the last 3 years;

(c) the details of acquisitions and mergers of banks during the last three years with latest guidelines in this regard;

(d) whether any more proposals for acquisition and mergers are in the pipeline; and

(e) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had